

# Is abortion safer than childbirth?

The repeated claims made by pro-abortion providers, supporters, and lobbyists compared to the facts:



*“He who frames the question frames the answer”*

## *The facts*

### ❑ Lower mortality after birth

- ❑ "Pregnancy-associated mortality after birth, spontaneous abortion, or induced abortion," from *The American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (Feb 2004).
- ❑ The abstract, based on medical records from Finland (due to socialized medicine, Finland has exceptionally accurate medical statistics), reports that **"mortality was lower after a birth (28.2/100,000) than after a spontaneous (51.9/100,000) or induced abortion (83.1/100,000)."**

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- ❑ Even these numbers can be used to argue that abortion is ‘safer’ but an **accurate comparison would have to be overlooked:** “After excluding all terminations **for medical reasons**, the pregnancy-associated mortality rate from all natural causes declined from 22.3 to 15.9 per 100,000 induced abortions, a rate lower than the mortality rate after a birth.” What are ‘medical reasons’? “He who frames the question or uses a faulty comparison, frames the answer!”

**Secular writers also oppose abortion**: “My point is that some women, depending upon the state of their health, are at higher risk of dying in childbirth than others. It does not follow that for any given woman, especially a healthy one, abortion is safer than carrying to term.” The Secular Case Against Abortion by Jennifer Roth: [www.infidels.org](http://www.infidels.org) (see: Comparing Apples to Oranges – below)

**Question:** Do pro-abortion supporters use high risk pregnancy figures and the doctors advise as a basis for making their assertions? If so, what about excellent treatment during a high risk pregnancy. Is that being overlooked. The fear of maternal death may be very powerful, but the facts prove that high risk pregnancies can result in healthy babies and healthy moms. The same can not be said of abortion.

### **Studies prove greater mortality following an abortion**

“A leading American medical journal has reported that women who have abortions are three times more likely to die in the following year than women who carry their pregnancies to term.

A study appearing in the February edition of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* compared medical and death records of the entire population of women in Finland between 1987 and 2000.

The researchers found that 2.95 times as many women died—both from natural and unnatural causes—in the year after their abortions as women who gave birth.

That confirms what researchers at the Elliot Institute—an abortion research group in Springfield, Ill.—found in a study published in the August 2002 issue of the *Southern Medical Journal*: Women who have abortions tend to be risk-takers, which explains their higher rates of death from accidents, suicide and homicide. But abortion also increases anxiety and depression, which in turn lead to higher rates of cardiovascular disease and stroke.” Source: Study: Abortion Increases Risk of Death for Women: Focus on the Family, Citizen. May, 2004.

### **Abortion deaths are reported only if they are clearly shown to be caused by the abortion – immediate hospitalization, etc.**

“Another wrinkle in the reporting structure is that the death certificate may report the cause of death (what the woman died of) without reporting that the *underlying* cause of her death was an abortion.

Common themes among reported abortion deaths are that the death occurs immediately or shortly after the abortion—or that the woman had such serious complications that she was taken to a nearby hospital where she died. The woman’s death is often made public when family members take legal action against the abortion clinic.” **Source:** *Carrie Gordon Earll is the Senior Policy Analyst for Bioethics at Focus on the Family and a fellow with the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity.* Focus, 2004

### **REAL People Die After An Abortion!**

#### **Partial List of Known Abortion Deaths**

Tamiia Russell, 15, died January 8, 2004 in Detroit, MI

Russell was six months pregnant when she died after complications from a second-trimester abortion. Following the abortion, "Russell developed heavy vaginal bleeding and died," according to a Wayne County autopsy. The abortionist at the Woman Care

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Clinic in Lathrup Village did not seek the consent of Russell's parents as state laws requires for those under 18 years of age. Russell's family hired an attorney to consider legal action against the abortion clinic.<sup>2</sup>

Holly Patterson, 18, died September 17, 2003 in Pleasanton, CA

Patterson died at a local hospital one week after receiving the chemical abortion drug, mifepristone (also known as RU-486), from a Planned Parenthood affiliate. She was seven weeks pregnant. The Alameda, California coroner's office reports that Patterson died from septic shock, caused by a "therapeutic, drug-induced abortion." The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is investigating her death.<sup>3</sup>

Diana Lopez, 25, died February 28, 2002 in Los Angeles, CA

Lopez was 18 weeks pregnant when she went to the Los Angeles Planned Parenthood for an abortion by Dr. Mark Maltzer. According to the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office, "she bled to death after her cervix was punctured during her abortion." She died at a nearby hospital after an emergency hysterectomy. Lopez' family is suing Planned Parenthood and Maltzer on behalf of her two living children.<sup>4</sup>

Nicey Washington, 26, died June 6, 2000 in Brooklyn, NY

Washington went to the Ambulatory Surgery center in Sunset Park for an abortion and died shortly afterwards. She was rushed to the hospital and declared dead about an hour later, after suffering heart failure.<sup>5</sup>

Kimberly K. Neil, age unknown, died May 22, 2000 in Fresno, CA

Abortionist Kenneth Wright and the Family Planning Associates Medical Group face a malpractice lawsuit filed by Neil's family—which claims Neil was not properly treated after she went into respiratory arrest during the May 5, 2000 abortion. Neil slipped into a coma and died May 22.<sup>6</sup>

Tamika Dowdy, 22, died December 2, 1998 in Brooklyn, NY

Paramedics were called to the Brooklyn Women's Medical Pavilion and began performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation on Dowdy when her heart stopped after having an abortion. She was transported to a nearby hospital where she was pronounced dead.<sup>7</sup>

Lou Anne Herron, 33, died April 14, 1998 in Phoenix, AZ

Abortion clinic employees told police Herron suffered in a recovery room for three hours after an abortion, bleeding heavily and complaining of numbness. Employees say abortionist John Biskind left the clinic while Herron was in distress. An employee called for emergency assistance, but by the time help arrived, Herron had bled to death due to a perforated uterus. In May 2001, Biskind was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to five years in prison in connection with Herron's death.<sup>8</sup> For more on Herron's death, see the June 2001 *Citizen* magazine article, "She Didn't Have to Die," accessible on-line.

Gracealynn T. Harris, 19, died September 16, 1997 in Stanton, DE

Harris had an abortion at the Delaware Women's Health Organization in the morning, and by 10 p.m. was declared dead at a local hospital. According to medical reports, Harris bled to death from a perforation in her uterus caused by the abortion. Harris' family filed a civil lawsuit against the abortion clinic and Mohammad Imran, the doctor who performed the abortion. In January 2002, a jury found both the clinic and Imran responsible and awarded \$2 million to Harris' 5-year-old son.<sup>9</sup>

Nichole Williams, 22, died April 25, 1997 in St. Louis, MO

Williams went to Reproductive Health Services in St. Louis for a first-trimester abortion.

According to news reports, her vital signs began to deteriorate during the abortion procedure and she was announced dead at Barnes-Jewish Hospital a short time later. Kansas City area abortionist Robert Crist performed Williams' abortion. Williams was Crist's third patient to die during or after an abortion-related procedure, including 19-year old Diane Boyd, who died in 1981 after reacting to the painkiller she received after an abortion.<sup>10</sup>

Tanya Williamson, 35, died September 7, 1996 in the Bronx, NY Williamson was 13 weeks pregnant when she had an abortion at Gynecological Surgical Services. She received a general anesthetic, went into cardiac arrest, and stopped breathing. Although a hospital was across the street, an ambulance was not called for at least 25 minutes. Williamson died, leaving behind a husband and four children.<sup>11</sup>

Sharon Hamptlon, 27, died December 13, 1996 in Moreno Valley, CA

Abortionist Bruce Steir pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter in Hamptlon's death. Hamptlon bled to death on the way home from the abortion clinic. According to the Sacramento Bee, "the California Medical Board already knew of five other similar surgeries mishandled by Steir that had resulted in serious complications."<sup>12</sup>

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Sources: <sup>2</sup>"Abortion death of teen girl spurs calls for investigation," *The Detroit News*, April 9, 2004; "Minor dies from abortion," *The O'Reilly Factor*, Fox News Network, April 15, 2004.

<sup>3</sup>"Autopsy Released in RU-486 Fatality," *The Argus* (Fremont, CA), November 2, 2003.

<sup>4</sup>"State faults clinic in death," *Sacramento Bee*, June 19, 2003.

<sup>5</sup>"City, state probe patient death at abortion clinic," *New York Post*, June 9, 2000.

<sup>6</sup>"Fresno doctor is sued in death," *Fresno Bee*, August 18, 2001.

<sup>7</sup>"Abort-linked death turns rapper's joy into heartbreak," *New York Post*, December 7, 1998.

<sup>8</sup>"BOMEX faces suit, Family of woman in botched abortion cites doctor's record," *Arizona Republic*, March 12, 1999; "Abortion doctor sentenced to five years," *Associated Press*, May 5, 2001.

<sup>9</sup>"Trial under way in lawsuit filed over abortion death," *Associated Press*, January 8, 2002; "Jury awards more than \$2 million in lawsuit over abortion death," *Associated Press*, January 16, 2002.

<sup>10</sup>"City's examiner clears doctor in abortion death," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 13, 1997.

<sup>11</sup>"A Woman's Right, A Woman's Risk," ABC News 20/20, March 8, 1999; "Abortion doctor tied to six deaths," *Journal News*, Westchester County, NY, January 31, 1999.

<sup>12</sup> "Guilty plea entered in fatal-abortion trial," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 7, 2000; "Botched abortion: An issue of medical negligence, not politics," *Sacramento Bee*, February 19, 1999. as reported in Focus: 2004

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*The outrageous claims of pro-abortion providers* (Planned Parenthood) and political groups (NARAL, ChoiceUSA, NOW (the National Organization of Women), The Institute for Women's Policy Research, Family Planning Perspectives, American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California and even abortionists themselves!) *cited as 'proof'*

"**Today, abortion is 11 times safer than** (Gold, 1990\*). Legal abortion has been associated with decreases in both maternal and infant mortality. According to one estimate, 1,500 pregnancy-related deaths were prevented in 1985 (AGI, 1990\*)."

**NOTE:** Both citations are by the Alan Guttmacher Institute's own publications! **AGI** is the Alan Guttmacher Institute ( AGI is the educational arm of Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the western hemisphere) so..they are using their own data stating that abortion is 'safer'. Where is the use of independent data?

"Since the U.S. mortality rate for pregnancy is 7.5 maternal 2 deaths for every 100,000 live-births, **abortion is actually safer than carrying a pregnancy to term and giving birth.** "Anti-Choice Myths About Abortion and Contraception: [www.choiceusa.org](http://www.choiceusa.org))

"Prior to *Roe v. Wade*, as many as 5,000 American women died annually as a direct result of unsafe abortions." Source: "*The Safety of Legal Abortion and the Hazards of Illegal Abortion*," *NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation*, 2003. **NARAL is the National AbortionRights Action League!**

"Today, abortion is ..**11 times safer than childbirth** and nearly twice as safe as a penicillin injection" **Source:** *Medical and Social Health Benefits Since Abortion was made Legal in the U.S.*, " *Planned Parenthood Federation of America*, 2002.

" Today, abortion is **10 times safer than childbirth**. Legal abortion has been associated with decreases in both maternal and infant mortality." (California National Organization of Women, quoting *(Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1998)*

"Legal abortion, on the other hand, is one of the safest surgical procedures available, and is **ten times safer than childbirth** Alan Guttmacher Institute 2000), quoted 'as fact' by the Institute for Women's Policy Research: <http://www.iwpr.org>

“Legal abortion is safer than a tonsillectomy, an appendectomy, and a shot of penicillin.”

**Source:** Warren M. Hern, **Abortion** Practice 23-24 (1984), citing J.E. Wennberg et al., *The Need For Assessing the Outcome of Common Medical Practices*, 1 Annual Review of Public Health 291 (1980); Nancy Felipe Russo, *Unwanted Childbearing, Abortion, and Women's Mental Health: Research Findings, Policy Implications* (summary of presidential address), Rocky Mountain Psychologist (1992), at 9. **Warren Hern is a second-trimester abortionist!**  
Quoted in: **10 Important Facts on Abortion: NARAL, Oregon**

## *The Claim made in Roe/Wade*

Inherent in the Roe versus Wade decision, legalizing abortion:

Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision, Jan. 22, 1973. slip opinion, 33-34.

“19th century state anti-abortion laws were enacted primarily to protect women from the high mortality of induced abortion in the 19th century; but now first trimester abortions are as safe or safer than child birth.” 2. Ibid., footnote 44.

## *Comparing ‘apples to oranges’*

Today, abortion one of the most commonly performed clinical procedures, is **eleven times safer than carrying a pregnancy to term**, and nearly twice as safe as a penicillin injection. Source: [www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org) using as their ‘proof’ Rachel Benson Gold, *Abortion and Women’s Health: A Turning Point for America?*. New York: AGI, 1990. \* **See above note**

- In 1965, when abortion was still illegal nationwide except in cases of life endangerment, a minimum of 193 women died from illegal abortions, and illegal abortion accounted for nearly 17 percent of all deaths due to pregnancy and childbirth in that year.<sup>1</sup> In 1973, the risk of dying from an abortion was 3.4 deaths per 100,000 legal abortions. This rate fell to 1.3 by 1977. For the 5 years ending in 1991 the risk of dying from a legal **abortion** had decreased to 0.6 per 100,000 legal abortions.<sup>2</sup>

1. **Source:** National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Vital Statistics of the United States, 1965: Vol. II--Mortality, Part A. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), 1967.
2. Calculated by The **Alan Guttmacher** Institute from data published in the Centers for Disease Control Annual **Abortion** Surveillance Reports. \* **Note, citation # 2 is again by the AGI, their own studies!**

“More **than** half of all abortions are performed at or before eight weeks of pregnancy, when the procedure is safest – 0.2 deaths per 100,000 procedures.” **Note: the citation here AGAIN is Rachel Benson Gold, Abortion and Women’s Health: A Turning Point for America?**. New York: AGI, 1990... **their own publication!**

### *Non-comparable figures*

“The claim that abortion is safer than childbirth has been used as a legal precedent in the judicial overturn of laws restricting abortion. However, a literature review shows that morbidity-mortality data for abortion and child birth are not always comparable.”

“Factors that may skew the comparison of childbirth versus abortion risks include:

- intervals that differ for reporting deaths abortions that can be reported as live births
- premature closing of records
- abortions that are unreported
- abortions performed on women not pregnant
- complications not reported by patient
- absence of follow-up
- abortion estimates that always exceed Public Health Service figures
- borderline cases reported inconsistently
- and many others.”

“Reported risks of induced abortion are numerous; the reports vary widely in the rates reported. Among the risks are: Increased susceptibility of breast cancer (24 times as likely if first pregnancy ends in abortion); predisposition to ectopic pregnancy (one study suggested that 45 percent of all ectopic pregnancies follow induced abortion); uterine infection (up to 17.5 percent of all cases after abortion); uterine hemorrhage (up to 4.9 percent); loss or deformity of subsequent infants; and many others.”

**Source:** <http://www.all.org/issues/ab06.htm>

### *Using a broad definition of maternal death*

The authors preferred to use the more comprehensive World Health Organization maternal death definition: "The death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not accidental or incidental causes." Source: <http://www.all.org/issues/ab06.htm>

### *Doubling the figures*

“Abortion proponents claim that suction curettage or vacuum aspiration is the "safest" abortion procedure. Yet, some women undergo two suction procedures to abort the same pregnancy. Thus, risk of abortion death and complications is doubled for such women. If reported twice, complication-free double abortions pad the "safety" figures.” Source: <http://www.all.org/issues/ab06.htm>

Discrepancies in tabulating the data: The Center for Disease Control versus the Guttmacher (Planned Parenthood) figures: “A wide discrepancy in the total number of abortions would necessarily mean a wide shift in the rate of abortion

complications, in favor of abortion safety. For example, if CDC death estimates are compared to the Guttmacher Institutes estimates of total abortions, the risk ratio will be lower than if CDC figures are used throughout. Which comparison is correct?" <http://www.all.org/issues/ab06.htm>

### *Grossly underestimating abortion deaths*

"There is no mandatory reporting of abortion complications in the U.S., including maternal death. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) began abortionsurveillance in 1969. However, the time lag in CDC notification is greater than 12 months for half of all maternal deaths. Maternal deaths are grossly underreported, with 19 previously unreported deaths associated with abortions having been identified from 1979-1986. The CDC quotes approximately one maternal death for every 100,000 abortions officially, which is death between the time of the procedure and 42 days later.

Therefore, statements made regarding the physical safety of abortion are based upon incomplete and inaccurate data. Many women are at much higher risk of death immediately after an induced abortion: for example, black women and minorities have 2.5 times the chance of dying, and abortions performed at greater than 16 weeks gestation have 15 times the risk of maternal mortality as compared to abortions at less than 12 weeks. Also, women over 40 years old, as compared to teens, have three times the chance of dying.

Late maternal mortality, which includes deaths occurring after the first 42 days following abortion are not reflected in CDC numbers, nor are data from all 50 states, because reporting is not currently mandatory. **Source: US Senate Committee Testimony:** [http://commerce.senate.gov/hearings/testimony.cfm?id=1083&wit\\_id=3062](http://commerce.senate.gov/hearings/testimony.cfm?id=1083&wit_id=3062)

"A reporter for the *Chicago Sun-Times* uncovered 12 abortion-related deaths in that city in 1978. The government statistics show only 16 deaths for the *entire country* in that year." **Source:** Ohio Right to Life, using data from: Sources: National Center for Health Statistics, *Health, United States, 1994*. Hyattsville, Maryland: Public Health Service, 1995. Table #17 (Data based primarily on reporting by State health departments and by facilities performing abortions.) *Abortion Surveillance 1985*, Center for Disease Control, Table #18. *Induced Abortion: World Review 1983*, by Christopher Tietze, The Population Council, p 103"

### *Making incorrect statements when admitting to the obvious dangers of abortion*

"While abortion is safer than childbirth, the risk of death from abortion increases 20% with each week of gestation from 8 weeks to 15 weeks and more rapidly between 15 and 20 weeks. The risk of major complications also increases 20% per week from 7 onwards."

Sources: Christopher Tietze and Stanley K. Henshaw, *Induced Abortio: A World Review* 111, 110, 103, (1986) and [www.aclu.org/issues/reproduct/parental](http://www.aclu.org/issues/reproduct/parental) involvement.

“..pro-abortionists reply .. that the number of abortion-related deaths before 1973 was grossly under-reported. But if they doubt the statistics for abortion deaths for years before 1973, how can they then triumphantly embrace the statistics after 1973?

They were collected by the same people using essentially the same methods. There is no reason to believe they suddenly became dramatically more accurate in 1973.”

**Using incorrect figures to prove a point then having to ‘trash’ those figures because they prove my point!**

**Source:** Ohio Right to Life, using data from: Sources: National Center for Health Statistics, *Health, United States, 1994*. Hyattsville, Maryland: Public Health Service, 1995. Table #17 (Data based primarily on reporting by State health departments and by facilities performing abortions.) *Abortion Surveillance 1985*, Center for Disease Control, Table #18. *Induced Abortion: World Review 1983*, by Christopher Tietze, The Population Council, p 103“

### *A sample of citing pro-abortion sources as ‘proof’*

**Sources: (note how many are independent sources - - NONE!)**

- 1 “International Policy and Practice: Responding to Unsafe Abortion,” Ipas, 2003.
- 2 “Medical and Social Health Benefits Since Abortion was made Legal in the U.S.,” **Planned Parenthood Federation of America**, 2002.
- 3 “Facts in Brief: Induced Abortion Worldwide, 2003,” **Alan Guttmacher Institute**.
- 4 “The Safety of Legal Abortion and the Hazards of Illegal Abortion,” **NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation**, 2003.
- 5 “Sharing Responsibility: Women, Society, and Abortion Worldwide,” **Alan Guttmacher Institute**, 1999.
- 6 “Envisioning Life Without Roe: Lessons Without Borders,” **Alan Guttmacher Institute**, 2003.
- 7 “Abortion in Context: United States and Worldwide,” **Alan Guttmacher Institute**, 1999.
- 8 “The Public Health Impact of Legal Abortion: 30 Years Later,” **Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health** 35:1, January/February 2003. Statistics compiled June 2003

### *Postscript*

Therefore, by use of the following, Planned Parenthood has made their outrageous statements:

1. Using the ‘educational arm’ AGI to ‘prove’ their statements
2. Doubling the figures
3. Citing the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision. No medical evidence used in the findings.
4. Comparing non-comparable figures (ie: comparing apples to oranges)
5. Using a broad definition of maternal death
6. Grossly underestimating abortion deaths because the number one and two causes of death may have been bleeding or mistakes in the administration of anesthesia

### **Other Tactics**

Extensive review of the medical literature shows that some abortion proponents, when confronted with medical articles on abortion deaths or complications, will:

- Ignore the articles;
- Claim that the scientific protocol is suspect;
- Claim that the conclusions are premature or not substantiated elsewhere;
- Claim there is no universal agreement in scientific circles;
  - Claim that data from foreign sources does not apply to American women;
  
- Claim that one abortion procedure cannot be compared to another;
- Dismiss damaging articles from some foreign countries because of illegality of abortions there, even though performed by physicians;
- Reclassify abortion-related deaths to other causes or factors; and
- Blame complications on smoking, drinking or other such factors.

**Source :** <http://www.all.org/issues/ab06.htm>

**Courtesy: Gateway Pregnancy Centers - January 2005**